

SEP  
22654

DISCOURSES

AT THE

INAUGURATION

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM HENRY GREEN,

AS

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL AND ORIENTAL LITERATURE

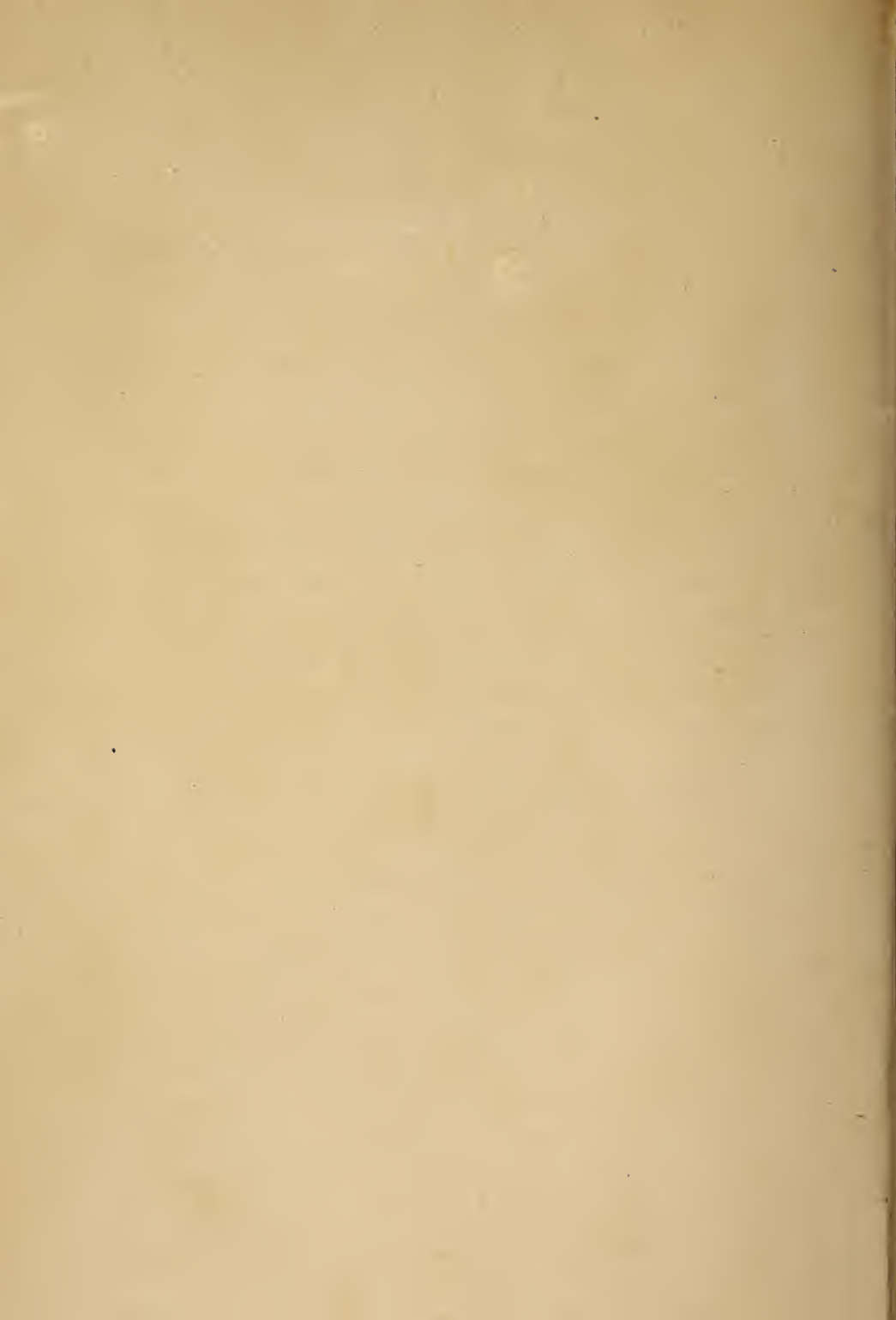
IN

THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON, N. J.

DELIVERED AT PRINCETON, SEPTEMBER 30, 1851,  
BEFORE THE DIRECTORS OF THE SEMINARY.

---

PHILADELPHIA:  
C. SHERMAN, PRINTER.  
1851.



# DISCOURSES

AT THE

## INAUGURATION

OF THE

REV. WILLIAM HENRY GREEN,

AS PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL AND ORIENTAL LITERATURE IN THE  
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY AT PRINCETON, N. J.

DELIVERED AT PRINCETON, SEPTEMBER 30, 1851,

BEFORE THE DIRECTORS OF THE SEMINARY.

I.

### THE CHARGE;

BY THE REV. SAMUEL BEACH JONES, D.D., OF BRIDGETON, N. J.

II.

### THE INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS.

---

PHILADELPHIA:  
C. SHERMAN, PRINTER.  
1851.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2013

<http://archive.org/details/datinau00gree>

A CHARGE  
TO THE PROFESSOR.

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL BEACH JONES, D.D.,  
PASTOR OF THE FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN BRIDGETON, N. J.



## CHARGE.

---

It has devolved upon me, in the behalf of the Directors of this Seminary, to address to you the "charge" deemed appropriate to this occasion. To us, not less than to yourself, the assumption of your present office is a matter of solemn and sacred interest. Our whole Church, indeed, regards with wise concern the induction of a new incumbent into the office of Professor in her oldest and most influential Theological School. But our interest is something more than what is common to the Church at large. With scarce an exception, the clerical members of this Board sustain to this institution a relationship of special interest, aside from that of official supervision. Among us are still found some of the fathers, through whose counsels, prayers, and labours, this Seminary was planted and reared into vigorous life; while most of us have been permitted to sit under its shade, and partake of its invaluable fruit. Our interest in this Seminary, therefore, is the interest of parents and children; the fond

pride and anxious solicitude of parental love, or the affectionate veneration of filial gratitude.

This interest, naturally inspired by past and present relationships, is enhanced by the conviction that at no former period of its history has our Seminary occupied a position of such importance to the Church. Upon the inauguration of its earliest officers, it was as yet problematical whether such a school was competent to realize the anticipations of its sanguine friends; whether the Church, which founded, would continue to afford to it her confidence and love; whether the enterprise would meet the approval of the Head of the Church; or whether its influence upon the various interests of the Church was destined to be wide-spread and enduring. The history of forty years has solved these questions, in a way which claims the devout gratitude of our Church.

It is difficult to conceive in what way the King of Zion could have attested his complacent regard for this institution more unequivocally than He has done. The character of those who here have exercised office, the rare longevity to which the services of its original teachers have been protracted, the remarkable harmony of sentiment and feeling, and the concert of action, which have marked the labours of all its instructors, the happy union of learning with sober wisdom and a sound faith, and, above all, the spirit of evangelic piety which has reigned here, evince, with



delightful clearness, the love of Christ for this institution and for the Church which dedicated it to his glory.

Scarcely less evident is the place which this Seminary holds in the affections of the Church. The conviction that this school has fulfilled the high ends for which it was founded, has never been better established, nor more pervading, than at this hour. Never was the Church more sensible of the services it has rendered her; and never has she reposed more confidence in those to whom she has entrusted its management. Although similar schools have been reared within her pale, the supposition that other seminaries were flourishing at the expense of that at Princeton, or that in any way its power for good was impaired, would excite painful solicitude throughout all her borders.

To this assurance of the place which our Seminary holds in the favour of Christ, and of that branch of the Church to which it specially belongs, is added our knowledge of the prominence which it has assumed before the Church at large. Far beyond the limits of our own denomination and our own country, Princeton Seminary has secured an enviable reputation. The adherents of a sound and complete Scriptural creed look with hope and confidence to this school, as the faithful and accomplished teacher of the doctrines of grace; while the numerous enemies of the truth have

learned to dread it, as their most formidable adversary.

These feelings towards our Seminary, and these convictions of its importance to the highest interests of Christ's cause, render the services of to-day much more than a mere ceremonial.

In charging you to "take heed to thyself and to thy doctrine," we feel that none but the Divine Head of the Church can estimate the consequences which must ensue upon the accession of a new member to the corps of instructors in this school, and that member called to fill a department of increasing interest and importance to the Church. That you have felt the responsibility of becoming a teacher to the future teachers of the Church, and especially of teacher in this school of teachers; that, in contemplating the magnitude of your work, you have considered its manifold difficulties as well as its pleasures,—we doubt not. In the admonitions, cautions, and exhortations addressed to you, we by no means imply that now, for the first time, your thoughts will have been directed to these considerations. It is possible that you may anxiously have revolved every topic which I shall present. Yet we trust that the occasion will serve to invest with increased weight and interest what may lack the advantage of originality.

The counsels I now offer to you are suggested by a *view of your office considered in itself; in its relation to*

*the present age; and in its bearings upon the interests of this Seminary, and of the Church to which it specially belongs.*

It cannot be too urgently pressed upon your consideration, that the Church is what her authorized teachers are; and her teachers are, chiefly, what their theological training makes them. Had the teachers of the Alexandrian school adhered to the simplicity and purity of the Gospel, instead of forcing an incongruous alliance between divine truth and Pagan sophistries, the early Church would have been spared many of its distractions and corruptions. How limited would be the range of Socinian Rationalism and Popish infatuation, if the theological schools of Geneva, Germany, Holland, and England, were under the tuition of men like Calvin, and Turretine, and Luther, and Lampe, and Owen!

The power and value of a sound training have been signally exemplified in the recent history of our own Church. Had other doctrines and another spirit than those which have prevailed in this Seminary, been permitted to mould our ministry for the last forty years, under what auspices would our Church now be placed? and where would be, or what would be, those institutions by which she is now prosecuting her divine work with so much success? To what single agency, so much as to the wholesome influence exerted here, does the Presbyterian Church owe her present condi-

tion?—her soundness in doctrine, her harmony of sentiment, her compactness of organization, and her efficient machinery for accomplishing her appropriate work? On all the great questions of doctrine and polity which have agitated the Church itself, and upon those exciting topics which have convulsed the country and rent in twain more than one branch of the Church, the pupils of this school have proved the potency of the conservative influence here exerted over their minds. Without overlooking other influences, or disparaging other instruments, we cannot but feel that this Seminary has done for the Church what our national Military Academy has done for our country; it has trained the men whose services were most effective in securing victory and peace.

What, in these respects, has been, will be. If the principles you inculcate be those of truth and soberness,—if your spirit be the spirit of evangelical “power, and love, and a sound mind,”—your scholars will imbibe and diffuse them through the Church. If, on the contrary, your instructions or your spirit be alien from those which have hitherto held the ascendancy in our Seminary, the Church cannot but catch the infection.

You are aware how prevalent is the sentiment that scholastic occupations, such as yours will be, tend to quench the fervour of piety, and to leave a teacher’s mind cold, dry, and spiritless. Too many examples



seem to give countenance to this opinion; and one in your situation, so much of whose labour must necessarily be intellectual, and—what is more—intellectual conflict with pestilent error, has need to keep his heart with anxious diligence. There is danger, great danger, that the heart lose its unction, while the head is taxed with such toil. There is danger that the theoretical engross the place which belongs of right to the practical; and thus that, by an undue devotion to one duty, the health of the soul become impaired, and its powers fail of their symmetrical development. There is danger that a Professor, in exposing and refuting the errors of books, overlook the more prevalent and practical errors which his pupils will be called to encounter. But there is no necessary inconsistency between the most diligent professional studies and the culture of a warm, genial, and profound piety. Where shall we look for more of a devout, spiritual, heavenly mind, than in the writings of Calvin, Witsius, and Leighton, and in those very writings, too, which constituted a part of their theological instructions?

You may, then, even while serving the Church by your intellectual labours, aid in the promotion of a higher piety; and you will do this by the habitual exhibition of a devout spirit to your pupils. It is not enough that you fulfil your vows of ordination and inauguration by inculcating an orthodox creed; that creed must be the utterance of a faith which standeth

“not in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God ;” a faith wrought in you, not by the convincing logic of reason alone, but by the powerful demonstration of the Holy Ghost. We might point to melancholy chapters in the Church’s history, which prove the insufficiency of a frigid orthodoxy to mould aright the ministers of truth. We might point to examples, where a sound creed has been inculcated by the lips, but where levity and irreverence of spirit, or an overweening self-esteem and a haughty contempt for others, on the part of teachers, has been followed by sad defections from purity of faith and life, on that of the pupils, and where such defections have been the palpable fruits of vicious examples. We could also refer you to instances in which the *animus* of the teacher has done well-nigh as much to secure a cordial adoption of his doctrines, as the formal reasonings by which they were sustained. If the spirit you breathe be in harmony with your doctrines, those doctrines, to the minds of your students, will be endowed with vitality ; and they will grow wherever they are scattered through the Church. If your faith in the divinity of the book which you are called to interpret be a sincere, fervent, and profound faith ; if your students discover that you unfold and illustrate its meaning, not as a mere *amateur* ; that you exhibit an orthodox exegesis, not to comply with professional engagements, but from deep-rooted, experimental conviction of its truth and

preciousness,—nothing can destroy the power of your example; it will be felt even by sceptical minds, when ingenuity has exhausted all its cavils and sophistries.

The department to which you have been called by the voice of the Church, derives a special interest from several circumstances, which deserve to be noticed as “signs of the times.”

It is not necessary to prove, that the disposition to draw Christian doctrine from its original fountains, rather than to receive it through the channels of theological systems, has very decidedly increased among ministers and candidates for the ministry in our Church and country. Methodized views of divine truth seem to have lost much of the authority which they once exerted. The restive spirit of the age is impatient under any authority, or system; and especially under systems of hoary antiquity. The ablest systems of divinity, moreover, are in obstinate antagonism to current theological predilections. To those, too, who wish to appear independent investigators of Christian doctrine, the study of the Scriptures in their original tongues is a captivating thought: it has the air of greater freedom from bias to all human authority; it looks like real independence. These and other reasons have, doubtless, contributed to weaken even the lawful influence of systematic theology, and to encourage greater attention to studies strictly biblical.

A more obvious cause may be found, in the extent to which the critical and philological labours of the ripest modern scholars have become available to students. The apparatus for the advantageous study of biblical criticism and exegesis is now accessible, and is now employed by multitudes, who, fifty years since, would scarcely have understood its design and use. It is not necessary, in this place, to maintain the value and necessity of an acquaintance with systematic theology. We do not need to be assured of its service in disciplining the mind; in imparting clear, discriminating, and enlarged views of revelation, and in training vigilant, quicksighted, and expert defenders of the truth. Still, it is ground for rejoicing, that the teachers of God's Word are qualifying themselves to draw their religious knowledge from the inspired Word, rather than from human compilations of its truths. We, at least, have no reason to dread the most rigorous application of sound Hermeneutics to the Sacred Volume. Recent occurrences in this institution have assured even the timid, that consummate scholarship, when united with those moral pre-requisites which are essential to the understanding of the Bible, so far from invalidating, greatly confirms the authority of those doctrines maintained by our Church. We have seen that, to the most accomplished scholars, who consult it with a becoming spirit, the Bible yields the same response, as to the most unlettered student;



except that it enounces, with greater distinctness, the truths which, in every age, have nourished humble piety.

But cheering as is the prospect of an increased attention to strictly biblical studies, there is one phenomenon which demands the notice of the Church, and especially of those who are set to defend the canonical authority and inspiration of the Sacred Volume, and to evolve its meaning by their interpretations. It is the unseemly and alarming fact, that, to a very large extent, the critical appliances of the scholar have been constructed by notorious enemies of the Gospel of God.

It is not, indeed, a new thing for intelligent theologians to study the writings of infidels and heretics. They have always done so; but they have studied them as infidel and heretical. They have read them for purposes of information or refutation; and, therefore, with all the caution and circumspection which a knowledge of their mischievous character and design would naturally inspire. But, in our day, it is customary to consult such writers, as authorities and helps to the understanding of the mind of the Spirit!

How monstrous would it have seemed to our fathers, for a student of theology to sit down to the study of Introduction, with the assistance of Voltaire; or of Prophecy, with the help of Anthony Collins; or of the Mosaic Economy, with the aid of Chubb; or

the Mysteries of the Christian system, with that of Toland and Tindal; or Miracles, with the aid of Blount, Woolston, or Hume. Yet, to an extent, this is virtually done, by those who employ the Introductions, Hermeneutical Treatises, Lexicons, and Commentaries of many of the most popular and eminent German scholars. The Rationalism of Germany is pronounced by German divines themselves, the growth of the English Deism of the seventeenth century. The seed, which in England fell on stony or thorny ground, found in the "dead orthodoxy" of Germany a congenial soil; and brought forth fruit an hundred-fold. That fruit is now set before us in much of the apparatus furnished to students, as an aid to the knowledge of God's inspired word.

This fruit has already produced "seed after its kind," both in our own land, and in the land of our fathers. Even where a sounder faith has revolted at its more flagrant enormities, we can often see that error has left its taint. We see it in the deference paid to learned errorists, even in matters respecting which they have no claim to deference. We see it in that sort of apologetic tone, in which certain great truths are still professed. We see it in laboured efforts to prove as true, what should be assumed as such; because it finds a better witness in an unsophisticated Christian conscience than in any mere reasoning whatsoever. We hear only a faint and half-

hearted protest against godless temerity, from some who are bound to speak out in tones of reprobation loud, deep, and unequivocal. We see it in the low views of inspiration, inculcated in some of the high places of theological instruction in our land. We hear an eminent biblical teacher asserting, that "an inspiration of words is quite improbable;" and by elaborate attempts aiming to convince us that we are bound to assign to the words of the loftiest prophecies, no other meaning than the prophets themselves assigned.

How far the theory which undertakes to distinguish between an inspiration of ideas and an inspiration of words may have owed its birth and consequence to those distinctions, which sounder men have ventured to assume when they speak of an "inspiration of superintendence," and of "elevation," and of "suggestion," it would be unseasonable now to consider. It is a subject, however, which the defenders of God's truth in its integrity will be compelled to consider. Certain it is, that those who profess to recognise the sacred writers as supernaturally inspired of God, while they ignore the claims of the writings themselves to such an inspiration, are standing on slippery places. It is impossible for them to receive and treat Holy Scripture with that devout reverence, which is produced by a hearty belief in the apostolic assertion: "Which things also we speak, not in the words which

man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; *πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγχερινοντες*, explaining the things of the Spirit, by the words of the Spirit." How is it possible, to regard and treat as the infallible voice of God those writings, which, whatever may be said of the sentiments they contain, were, as to their language, the work of fallible men? Such teachers have no cause for astonishment, whatever may be their alarm, when their pupils venture a step in advance; and claim for the illumination which is common to all true Christians, an equality with that infallible guidance vouchsafed to prophets, apostles, and evangelists.

This last phase of opinion respecting the doctrine of inspiration claims the vigilant notice of the Church, and especially of her theological teachers. Not that it is wholly a new form of human pride and delusion; for claims to an inward light, of equal brightness and safety with the written word, have been made by enthusiasts and mystics in every age. But it comes to us now in imposing forms; and it is diffused among us through new and more dangerous channels.

The recent defection from among the faculty of the orthodox school of Geneva has attracted special attention, because public sentiment in that meridian has compelled a public renunciation of office. In Germany, and among writers, too, usually esteemed evangelical, similar views are widely prevalent. Who can view without a shudder the cool *nonchalance* with which



such an authority as Neander sits in judgment upon Matthew, and Mark, and Luke, and John?—pronouncing them right here, and wrong there; ascribing this statement of fact, or that announcement of doctrine, to the mere “subjectivity” of the writer, who, in his estimation, is as lawful subject of criticism and correction as Luther, or Calvin, or any other pious but fallible man.

The prevalence of such errors among professed defenders and expounders of Holy Writ has not been without its influence in producing another phenomenon which well deserves your notice. I refer to the recent abandonment of the great Protestant doctrine, and the open avowal of the Romish dogma respecting the authority of the Scriptures, on the part of many professed Protestants. It is, indeed, natural for men who cannot find in Scripture a sufficient authority for their belief and practice, to deny its sufficiency as a rule for the Church of Christ. It ought not to excite surprise, when the members of a communion which retained so many vestiges of Popery, and which has betrayed so many affinities for it, should, under favourable circumstances, be disposed to confederate with it. Still less should we wonder, that men whose faith has never stood “in the power of God,” should, under the pressure of temptation, seek in the authority of the Church a firmer foundation than what is afforded by their individual convictions

and reasonings. But those who have participated in the Romeward movement of the Oxford Tractarians assign, as a special cause of their retrogression, the danger to which the very foundations of Christianity are exposed from Rationalistic views of the Bible, and the impossibility of deciding the points at issue but by the authority of the Church.

These signs of our times clearly indicate that the battle in defence of the sufficient and sole authority of the Scriptures is to be fought with renewed earnestness; and your department covers the ground on which the contest is to be decided and the victory won. For various reasons, therefore, it becomes you to keep a steady eye to this conflict, in your professional instructions. The contest, which now waxes more and more rife, is not a dispute for outposts, but for the possession of the citadel itself.

As a teacher in the Presbyterian Church, you should be prepared to assume and maintain the high ground already occupied by your Church, as to the points at issue. Be admonished, by the history of the Church, to refuse all concessions and compromises with the enemies of God's truth. The high ground of defence, when once abandoned, is not permitted by the enemy to remain a neutral territory. Posts deserted through a false confidence in your strength, or a spurious liberality towards your adversaries, will soon be occupied as positions whence with greater effect to assail the

ark of God. In an eminent degree may the Presbyterian Church be said to maintain the sufficient and exclusive authority of the Bible, as the Christian's rule of faith and life. Her doctrines, polity, and usages, rest their claims on the authority of the written Word alone; and the highest degree of inspiration, the inspiration of the writings as well as of the writers,—if there be meaning in such a distinction,—is everywhere in her standards assumed as an incontrovertible fact. The position and reputation of this Seminary demand the maintenance of the Church's faith on this subject. You and your colleagues are justly viewed as the representatives of a church, the very fulness of whose doctrinal symbols, and the sharp exactness with which those doctrines are defined, tend to render her conservative of the ancient faith. Latitudinarian views and experimental vagaries in some quarters excite little surprise; but should Princeton venture to follow wandering stars, the consternation felt would be "as when a standard-bearer fainteth." There are, doubtless, truths which the steady evolutions of Providence may develope with greater clearness to the Church; and the history of our Church shows how ready she is to acknowledge these developments, by giving to such truths greater prominence, and new applications. As a church, we may be said to occupy the *via media* between rigid immobility and precipitate progress. But old truths are truths still;

and with respect to a truth so fundamental to the life of the Church as that of the sufficient and sole authority of God's Word, we need expect no new light; and we dare not swerve a line from the ancient landmark.

To you, in part, it belongs to teach what is the real office of the Church as to the Scriptures, by exhibiting her function and position with respect to the integrity, canonical authority, and inspiration of the Sacred Books. You have within your reach the most effective weapons with which to repel the assaults of traditionists on the one hand, and the advocates of a mere nominal inspiration on the other. The subject of Inspiration may properly enough be made the theme of a lecture, as introductory to a course of didactic theology; but you possess the amplest means of exhibiting, illustrating, and confirming this doctrine. The incompetency of the Church to impart authority to those very records upon which alone rests all her own authority to do and to teach, may properly enough be treated by your colleagues; but to you belong the fairest opportunities of convincing your pupils that the Sacred Word carries within itself the highest credentials of its divinity; so that, without the witness of the Church, it is able to substantiate its claims to inspiration, and to supreme authority over the understanding and conscience.

A lecturer on theology may teach the inspiration and sufficiency of Scripture, as a botanist or geologist may



teach their respective sciences by the illustrative aids of a *hortus siccus* or cabinet specimens. But the expounder of the Bible is like the botanist who roams field and forest with his pupils; or the geologist who exhibits to the eye the actual formations of the globe.

In every part of that volume which you will be called to interpret to your pupils, you find manifest and numberless proofs that He who so framed the heavens as to declare the glory of His eternal power and Godhead, has so framed his Word as to unfold the glory of his wisdom, holiness, and grace; that if the footprints of God our Creator are visible throughout the world, the handiwork of God our Saviour is, with equal distinctness, displayed in the volume of his Word; and that if the laws of our intellectual constitution compel us to own an intelligent contriver of the one, the laws of our moral nature constrain us to acknowledge a holy and omniscient Spirit as the author of the other. Without formal and elaborate disquisitions, you may incidentally furnish to your students convincing illustrations of the apostolic doctrine, that the written Word is a surer testimony to the soul than the voice heard on the mount of transfiguration, and much more than the voice of the Church, were that voice *semper, ubicunque, et ab omnibus idem*. You may direct their notice to the manifold evidences of a divine hand, as well as a divine mind, in this sacred book. You may exhibit the fallacy of

all attempts to discriminate between the parts of Scripture, as more or less fully inspired. You may teach them to regard the words of Scripture as Christ and his apostles regarded them,—even as the words of the Holy Ghost. Thus will you guard them against the insidious subtleties by which they are now endangered, and convince them that those who bring their philosophy to the explanation of an acknowledged mystery are, after all, but “minute philosophers.” Let your students be well versed in these proofs of the divinity of the Bible; let them be familiarized, not only with the direct assertions, but with the indirect and various evidences, which declare it to be God’s work, and not man’s; and you furnish them at once with the safest panoply and the most formidable weapons against the two great heresies of the age,—that which asserts the necessity of the Church’s authority in order to that of Scripture, and that which claims for personal illumination equal authority with Scripture itself. Though seemingly heterogeneous, these errors are scions of a common stock; and hence, in time, they always produce the same fruit. They both proceed from a moral incapacity to discern, and a consequent denial of, the “self-evidencing power of Holy Scripture.” The one exalts the authority of individual man, the other the authority of man in the collective capacity of the Church; and, in thus exalting man, each becomes guilty of degrading the Word

of God. It is, therefore, no mystery that each in their season becomes productive of flagrant infidelity. The Bible itself is the armory from which your students can best equip themselves for successful warfare against both.

Be careful to magnify your office, by asserting and vindicating the importance of your own department.

You have a special need to do this. Observation has taught you the proneness of students to underrate it. You will have numerous applications for dispensation and indulgence, from those who are approaching the end of their *curriculum*. Be resolute in your purpose, to refuse all requests for a release from the closing course of your instructions. After all that the Church has said and done, to make of her ministers biblical scholars, it is worse than unwise in students to intermit their efforts in your department, at the very time when these studies are becoming of practical value. The Church has not endowed professorships and placed her choicest men here, in order to give to her sons such a smattering of Greek and Hebrew, as will just secure a Presbyterial licensure. By the explicit declaration of the "Plan" of this Seminary, her aim is to impart such a knowledge of the original tongues, as will be available to her ministers through life. Be stringent, therefore, in your requisitions on your students, down to the close of the prescribed course of study.

Just in proportion to the facility with which you yield to the pleas of weak vision, and weak digestion, will you find these infirmities multiply. Be not afraid to disclose the unpalatable truth, that infirmities of head and heart are much more frequent maladies among students, than infirmities of the body. If, among your pupils, you find a head too weak to appreciate the importance of ample furniture; or a heart too weak to endure the toil necessary to the highest future usefulness; then help these weaknesses by requiring all such valetudinarians faithfully to follow you to the very termination of your course.

But we would not recommend the exercise of your lawful authority, as the principal means of securing attention to your special department. Aim to convince your students, that the man who, with right motives, goes to the very fountain, rather than to the streams of divine truth, puts most honour upon the word of God; and, therefore, is most likely to be honoured of God. Let them know that, with few exceptions, the men whom God has made most extensively and permanently useful to his Church, were eminent in their times as biblical scholars; and that this must be the case, even to a greater extent than it has been. Let them know, that the student who can draw his theology and philosophy from the Bible, is less likely than others, to be entangled in the meshes of a false philosophy. Let them know, that amid the



ceaseless mutations of philosophical systems, there is one system which remains unchanged; and that system is the only one which the Bible recognises as true,—the Philosophy of Common Sense. In demolishing specious sophistries, and in reaching the souls of sinners, they will find this philosophy a trenchant weapon; inferior in keenness only to “the sword of the Spirit.” In a word, aim to inspire the conviction that it is more seemly for Protestants to be expert interpreters of their Rule of Faith than to be dexterous defenders of human symbols and systems; and that the deductions of a fair scriptural exegesis must, to a right-feeling mind, be more conclusive than the most rigid theological dialectics. You will have done much towards the formation of accomplished divines, when you persuade your students of the truth of the maxim, “*Bonus Textuarius est Bonus Theologus.*”

As preachers of the Word, too, your students should be made to feel the importance of a competency to consult that Word in its originals. The student who examines every text in the language and connexion in which God has given it, is conscious of standing on firmer ground, and he will move with a steadier step, than he who depends for his knowledge on a mere version, or popular commentator. The sermons of such preachers are likely to possess more of freshness, and raciness, and agreeable variety, than where theological knowledge is drawn from systems of divinity, however

judicious. For the sake of uniformity and harmony of doctrine in a church, it is of eminent importance that her ministers be conducted through the same system of theology. Our Church contemplated this end in the foundation of this Seminary; and her history has proved the wisdom of the design.

But if digests of divinity be the only or the chief sources of theological information, the sermons of ministers, thus trained, will be likely to betray an undesirable sameness of features. To secure circumstantial variety with substantial unity, in the matter of preaching, our students should be as expert interpreters, as they are well-disciplined theological logicians.

It may not be amiss in this connexion, to urge upon your attention what, perhaps, is more likely to be overlooked where the work of ministerial training is divided among several teachers, than where the whole work is entrusted to an individual. It is the obvious, but sometimes forgotten fact, that the great aim of each department should be, to make good preachers.

Scholarship is but a means to an end; and, except in a few cases, its value is to be measured by its availability to the pulpit. Our congregations are but indifferent judges of proficiency in Greek inflections, or Hebrew roots; but they esteem themselves, and they will be, judges of every man's capacity to preach. The kind of work, too, which is demanded in our

country, calls for special attention to the art of popular address. In aiming to make scholars, then, let it never be forgotten that this scholarship is designed to reach the multitude chiefly through the pulpit. To secure excellence in the work of preaching should be the aim of every theological school; but most of all, of the schools of our own Church.

For her increase and legitimate influence, no church is so dependent on her preachers, as the Presbyterian :\* and it is one proof of her apostolicity, that this is so. She has less to captivate mankind, aside from the style of her preaching, than any other Christian denomination. She holds forth no diluted system of doctrine, by which to propitiate the carnal mind to the mortifying truths of the Gospel. She employs no pompous ritual, by which to fascinate the senses. She does not consult the deep-seated propensity of man to substitute ceremonies for spiritualities; by exalting a mere sacrament above the very truths upon which it is founded. She does not venture to relieve the sinner's soul of its sense of direct responsibility to God, by becoming a virtual sponsor for its salvation. She has no such flattering unction for the conscience, as that which is found in the delightful delusion—in the Church, in Christ. She knows nothing of that religious materialism by which contact with a certain line of ministry,

\* We of course include under this term the different branches of the great Presbyterian family.

and communication in sacraments duly solemnized, assures the soul of its union with the Fountain of life. With an emphasis which would be unseemly in many quarters, she may say, "Christ sent me, not to baptize, but to preach the Gospel." Upon her preaching, more than upon all else besides, and more than any sect besides, does she depend, under God, for her lawful position in, and before, the world. To furnish accomplished preachers, therefore, should be the aim of every teacher in our Seminary.

Before I turn to my last topic, permit me to suggest to you the propriety of keeping steadily before your mind a service of another kind which you may render to the Church, without trenching upon your principal duties in this Seminary. I refer to the preparation of some treatise, for the use of scholars in your own department.

The condition of students who desire to search the Word of God with the best appliances furnished by recent scholars, is very like that of Israel, when "they went down to the Philistines to sharpen every man his share, and his coulter, and his axe, and his mattock." We are, in some measure, compelled to resort to the uncircumcised, when we would sharpen our implements of industry, or warfare; and it is not without peril that we adventure ourselves into the enemy's territory. Not only are the streams defiled, but the very fountains are tainted. The venom distilled into



introductions and commentaries may be detected even in lexicons and systems of Hermeneutics. To those in your station we are compelled to look for our much-needed helps. Your predecessors in this department have led the way, and laid the Christian world under obligations, by the fruits of their labour. Like the conquerors of Napoleon, they learned the art of modern warfare from the enemies of truth, and then vanquished them by their own tactics and weapons. Like David, they have spoiled the uncircumcised of their treasures, and consecrated them to the service of God, in a monument which, we trust, will be more enduring than the temple itself. It is no small satisfaction to reflect, that while they still perform the duties of the living teacher, their writings are moulding influential minds, not only throughout their own church and country, but in distant lands and in foreign tongues. They have convinced the timid, that the cause of truth has nothing to dread, but much to hope, from consummate scholarship, wherever it is directed by a devout heart and a solid judgment. May we not hope, that the Church is destined to receive from you, as it has from every other teacher in this school, a contribution to her literature which shall do honour to the name of Princeton, and lasting service to truth and godliness.

I have thus far had respect, chiefly, to your labours for the intellectual welfare of this Seminary, and of

the Church. There is another department of duty, to overlook which, would be to lose sight of one great end for which this institution was reared.

No one can inspect the original "Plan" of this Seminary, without being impressed by the pre-eminence given to the culture of piety, above mere scholastic acquisitions.

High as was the place assigned to professional knowledge, it was in the view of the Church, and by the distinct avowal of its "Plan," wholly subordinate to a practical obedience to Christ, in a holy, spiritual life. Learning, in the estimation of those who drafted our "Plan," was subsidiary to the promotion of vital godliness in the Church, and throughout the world. They press this upon the hearts of teachers and scholars. They are not content with the bare assertion of its importance, but suggest the means by which it may be promoted. In addition to the sedulous culture of piety in the closet, they recommend daily, weekly, and monthly meetings for prayer and Christian conference. They look to the intimate social life here led by the students, as a precious means of fostering piety, as well as of laying a foundation for valuable friendships. They view the professors, not simply as teachers, but as pastors; and, through their Christian intercourse, they hoped to nurture the hearts, as well as to store the minds of their students.

And this Seminary has in a good measure realized

the wishes and prayers of its founders. Through the grace of God, experimental piety, as well as orthodoxy, have flourished here. This Seminary owes its hold on the confidence of the Church, far more to its religious character, than to its orthodoxy, or its learning. May this ever be its highest, as it is its most honourable distinction.

You possess immense advantages for promoting the life of religion ; may you be enabled to improve them, by diffusing the savour of godliness among all who come within the sphere of your influence. Our country, in a special manner, requires an active, practical, and executive, rather than a recluse and contemplative piety ; may you be successful in nurturing it. The low tone of religious feeling, even among evangelical men, in the universities of Germany, has been ascribed to the absence of frequent and confidential religious intercourse between professors and their students. May you, as your colleagues have done, prove yourself the Christian friend and spiritual counsellor, as well as the acceptable teacher of your scholars. Never forget, that symbols, however sound ; forms of government, however scriptural ; subscription to formulas, however stringent, are inadequate safeguards against heresy, when vital piety is gone. A fervid piety, nurtured by the Spirit of God, is the only preservative of the truth. The rapid spread of English Deism among the clergy of Germany has been ascribed by Neander to

the "dead orthodoxy" which there prevailed. Has not God permitted Germany to commit her speculative absurdities and impieties for the benefit of his Church, as he permitted France to perpetrate her practical atrocities for the instruction of the nations? France cast away from her the very word of God itself, and God deluged her with her own blood. Germany, while it retained the letter of the word, cast contempt upon that Spirit who gave it; and God has permitted a wasting deluge of impiety to sweep over the very birthplace of the Reformation. May the spectacle prove a beacon to our Church and our schools, warning us to beware of a vain confidence in the letter, when the spirit of life is wanting, and pointing to the doom which God has reserved for pride of intellect and godless learning.

With one heart can we this day unite in the prayer, that your admission to the corps of revered and beloved teachers may be to them, to their students, and to the Church, a ground of grateful joy for many years to come; that your feelings, as well as your doctrines, may so harmonize with theirs, as to preserve "the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace;" that your name may be associated with "whatsoever is honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report," as is the venerable name of SAMUEL MILLER; and when your work here shall have been accomplished, may your memory and services be enshrined in the

heart of a grateful Church, as will be those of the venerated men, to whom God so graciously entrusted the infancy of this Seminary.

“ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you alway. Amen.”





AN INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

BY THE

REV. WILLIAM HENRY GREEN,

PROFESSOR OF BIBLICAL AND ORIENTAL LITERATURE IN THE THEOLOGICAL  
SEMINARY AT PRINCETON.





## INAUGURAL DISCOURSE.

---

THE religious questions of the age seem to be concentrating more and more about one point,—the authority due to the Holy Scriptures. Are they the sole infallible rule of faith? Or are they an infallible rule of faith at all? It is here precisely that there must be fought the grand battle with Ritualism on the one hand, and with Scepticism on the other. The parties are merely skirmishing about the outposts, so long as they confine their controversy to other matters. It is not until they come to this, that they are joined in close and mortal combat, and the result here is decisive of the entire conflict. Ritualism, entrenching itself in the felt necessities of human nature, and its cravings for divine light and guidance, is not content with that single medium by which those necessities are in fact met, and that guidance is in fact furnished, but has set up, in addition to the reality of an inspired word, the figment of an inspired church, whose traditions preserved within her communion, and whose decisions pronounced *ex cathedrâ* are to be received

as of equal authority and value with the true sayings of God. Reacting from the absurdities and inconsistencies which follow upon this claim for infallibility for what is liable to err and often has erred, Scepticism flies to the opposite extreme, of refusing to admit any infallible guide at all ; and, because it has been deluded by the *ignis fatuus*, distrusts the pole-star.

But this transition, however natural, and however easily accounted for, is an irrational one. It is no superstition of a past age, such as advancing knowledge should sweep away, to be held by the authority of the word of God. There is a bondage in authority, and that of the most degrading kind, and against it every correct and every noble principle of our nature rises in rebellion, when it would constrain to cleave to error. It imposes on its subjects a craven fear of examination, a dread to see the truth even when exhibited, and an obstinate adherence, in spite of clear light and convincing argument, and even the evidence of the senses, to the dicta of their teachers. But there is no slavery, and no unmanliness, in committing ourselves to the guidance of infallible truth. It is no constraint laid upon a man's faculties to require him to believe simply on authority, where that authority cannot mislead ; it is then itself a sufficient reason for believing. The free spirit of investigation need not be fettered, nor the ear closed upon any of the whisperings of truth which can be caught anywhere

around us. We are not required to walk blindfold in following our guide, but rather to keep our eyes wide open, that we may see how safely he conducts us, and how treacherous is every other path but that in which he leads. It is no part of our creed to discard facts, wherever or by whomsoever brought to light, nor to refuse just inferences, nor to decline the most thorough searching of the conclusions which we have reached, nor their examination from the most varied points of observation, nor to forbid the investigation of new and untrodden paths, from an anxiety lest all this should prove hazardous to the symbols of our faith. With our conviction of their truth is allied the confident persuasion that every fresh discovery, in whatsoever direction, must ultimately tend to confirm them. We are, indeed, saved by the confidence we repose in them from joining in the wild chase after every vagary, losing our balance at every blow, or being driven about by every shifting wind. We shall not at the first shock throw ourselves off the firm foundation tested by ages, and commit our fortunes to the unsteady sea of conjecture. We feel entirely secure of our standing, even when appearances seem momentarily to lie against it. The winds may roar, and the floods may dash tumultuously; but when the tempest clears away and the waves recede, it will be seen that the tower of our defence still stands; and if the sand and earth which had gathered about its base are

washed away, it will only be to reveal still more distinctly the solid rock on which it is built, and which can neither be shaken nor destroyed. If we might, in the first instance, have been disposed to tremble for the stability of God's truth, yet the invariable result which has followed in a thousand cases before, is of itself sufficient to reassure us, and to show how powerless is every weapon of hostility, and how certain the Bible is of being at last fully and triumphantly vindicated. Doubts and difficulties have been started with reference to the Bible, as great as any that now remain or are likely ever to be raised again, and they have been solved. Objections have been paraded with a great show of triumph, as though the cause of the Bible had now received its finishing-stroke; but they have been answered, to the confusion of their authors. Investigations have been set on foot, which at the outset seemed to bode only evil to the Scriptures; yet the end has always been, to add a new verification of their truth. Supposed harmonies with natural truth, once much relied upon in vindication of Scripture, have been stricken from us; but even this has had no other result than to give us, instead of the apparent and the superficial, real harmonies, lying far deeper, which bring out a stronger evidence than had been before suspected.

Neither in the reason of the thing, therefore, nor in experience, is it either slavish or unsafe to subject our



faith to the authority of Scripture. Nor is it peculiar to theological science that it obliges us to trust thus implicitly to the veracity of God. This is unhesitatingly done, and is necessary to be done, in every other science, in every department indeed of human life. Certainty of knowledge is impossible in anything without it. Why is the plain testimony of the senses, or why are the evident deductions of reason, rested in as undoubted, but from the conviction that the Author of our nature cannot deceive us? What confidence have we in the real existence of things, or that phenomena are actually as we observe them,—what confidence even in those primary principles we call self-evident,—which does not base itself at last upon the assumption that God is true? And who ever cherishes the fear that Nature, which is his work, will speak falsely as to that of which she is the depository, or that she will ever contradict herself? Who indulges an apprehension that a truth fairly deducible from the phenomena of any part of the material universe, will be shown to be a falsity by phenomena derived elsewhere? The chemist commits himself implicitly to the guidance of that domain of physics which is his chosen field. But that does not make him bigotedly despise or denounce investigations elsewhere. He does not fear the researches of the natural philosopher, astronomer, or mathematician, as though his favourite pursuit were in any danger of being unsettled or overthrown by



theirs. And yet either one of them may bring him in facts in apparent conflict with the results of his own observations. But this only compels him to re-examine his grounds and modify his previous conclusions. It never awakens a doubt of the reality or the truthfulness of what Nature actually teaches, whether in his own department or in any other. His conviction is unshaken that the phenomena which he has been inspecting spoke truth, and that either what now appears in other quarters to contradict them shall be found at last to be perfectly consistent with the laws he has inferred, if not actually sequences from them; or, if he has fallen into error, it is from imperfect observation or too hasty deductions; and a more careful and cautious examination, aided by the fresh light he has now received, will set him right.

Now we may claim in Theology the same that is everywhere else freely allowed,—that the testimony of God should be accepted as undoubted truth. God speaking in his Word is worthy of the same implicit deference as when he speaks in his works. We claim, too, for this science what is accorded to all others,—that it shall be suffered to base itself upon its proper evidence. The Scriptures cover ground respecting which we have no other means of information. God has made in them no superfluous revelation. That is not bestowed upon man by immediate gift from heaven which his own exertions can procure for himself. The

arts of civilized life can be taught him sufficiently by the necessities of his condition. Natural science lies in a region which his own faculties are competent to investigate. But God, and spiritual things, and the divine scheme of a sinner's salvation, and the method by which it may be made available to us as individuals, are subjects respecting which God alone can inform us. Untaught by him, we must remain ignorant; and ignorance here involves perdition. The Bible, therefore, must be made the basis of our religious knowledge, for the simple reason that in all the great, leading, essential points, it is its exclusive source. We admit that there is a border line between reason and revelation, and that there are points of contact which are covered by both. Here we shall listen to both, and expect their utterances to be consistent. But we shall not discard the Word of God in favour of some alleged testimony from his works. We shall not for the first fancied inconsistency, in the veriest trifle it may be, give up our faith in it as unreliable and untrue. But while we hearken to Nature's voice wherever she has any claim to be heard or has anything to utter, we yet, throughout, base our faith ultimately and solely upon the Scriptures. We know nothing superior to them in authority, nothing co-ordinate with them. While we yield the domain of nature to the student of physical and intellectual science, the word of God is to us the great storehouse of know-

ledge; our aim is simply to educe its teachings; our primary question is, What saith the Scripture? And to insist upon our discarding it, or exalting anything above it in this its proper sphere, would be like requiring the chemist to leave his laboratory, destroy his apparatus, and discontinue his experiments, and to pursue his investigations with the aid only of the telescope of the astronomer.

It is the grand aim of the ministry, as the religious teachers of the world, to diffuse abroad the truths of the Bible; the Bible, as the only source of saving knowledge, the only guide to the favour of God, and holiness and heaven; which alone speaks of atonement by the blood of the cross, and whose faithful proclamation is accompanied by the renewing energy of the Holy Ghost. It is their sacred office to expound its heavenly teachings to the understanding; to give them a lodgment in the heart and a hold upon the conscience; to persuade men to embrace them and be saved.

The Holy Scriptures form, therefore, deservedly the chief object of study in a theological course; and to promote a thorough and exact acquaintance with their contents as seen from all sides, and to qualify for their exposition and defence, is the aim, not of one of its departments merely, but of all. Of the various aspects under which we may view the Scriptures, and the various methods in which their study may be pro-

fitably pursued, it is not our purpose now to speak. We ask your attention but to the peculiar advantages of one particular method, which may be called *the direct, consecutive, or exegetical study of the inspired volume*. By this, as distinguished from a systematic or topical method, we mean that which takes up the Scriptures, or any individual portion of them, in regular course, developing the meaning chapter by chapter and verse by verse.

The first consideration in favour of this method is, that it places before us the lively oracles in the precise form given to them by the inspired writers. If it were from no other motive than a laudable curiosity, we would wish to acquaint ourselves familiarly with the precise form in which a revelation so important was first communicated to the world; and if it had no advantage but this, it would still possess both interest and importance as a branch of historical inquiry. If, again, the form of Scripture were wholly a human one, and no divine superintendence or direction had been exerted over it to make it what it is, we would still esteem it of importance; for we would expect that the sacred penmen had presented these heavenly truths in such a shape and such combinations as most impressed themselves, or seemed to them best adapted to promote the end of their communication. But when we call to mind that Scripture was neither accidental in its form, nor merely human, but, like the



temple of old, wrought after a celestial pattern, and, even in its minutest parts, accurately designed from above in number, weight, and measure, this is sufficient to teach us that there are good reasons for its being as it is, rather than otherwise. If the form of Scripture, no less than its substance, is from God, then, however superior in intrinsic value the latter may be, no one will say that the former ought to be overlooked.

The contents of Scripture are not there exhibited according to any systematic arrangement. Neither here nor in Nature are things drawn out in regular order, squared to a rule, or labelled by genera and classes. Nature exhibits to us neither a botanist's herbarium nor a mineralogical cabinet. But it presents its objects in that mingled yet artless diversity which is the charm of its landscapes, and adds to the impressive grandeur of its scenery. Its very seeming confusion produces an exquisiteness of effect, which the artificial dispositions of science could never accomplish. We want Nature just as it is, and we want the Bible just as it is. There are advantages in classification, and method, and scientific distribution; and these may be employed with profit in the study of the Bible as of other things. But let not the importance which really attaches to its inspired form be overlooked. If the Book of God was to accomplish its end, it must not only contain the truth which was needed



to be known, but it must present it in such shapes and combinations as would fit it to attract, instruct, and impress, and that not one class of men, nor one generation of men, but the race. Who does not feel how it would be stripped of its magic power over the popular mind and heart, if, instead of being what it is, it were a book of dry, didactic formulas, methodically arranged? if, instead of its living forms of flesh and blood, it gave us only abstract generalizations? The precise adaptation of the truths of Scripture to man's nature and necessities furnishes a strong argument for the divinity of its origin; and in this argument a point of no small force may be supplied by the adaptation visible in the very form in which these truths are presented. Instead of admitting it as an argument against the completeness of Scripture that there is in it no appearance of systematic arrangement, and that it looks so like an aggregation of parts which owed their origin and their shape to occasional influences, we point rather to the fact that this lack of system, joined with inexhaustible fulness, and even a lavish profusion, is a general feature of God's works; and that, instead of detracting from the worth of the Bible, it was really a necessary element in its fitness for its grand design. If there is this value attaching to the form of Scripture, it is no small recommendation to any method of study that it preserves it intact.

It is, moreover, characteristic of the word of God

not to convey its teachings after one determinate method, but to be continually varying its exhibitions of the same truth. To draw out its teachings into a system in which each truth shall have assigned to it its precise position, and stand in its definite relation to each of the others, and to study it only thus, would be to lose the benefit of this boundless variety. Let us, in illustration of this, direct our attention to some of the diversities of the inspired volume.

1. The diversity in the character of the composition. There is the parable, the proverb, the psalm, the various styles of poetry, prophecy, history, the epistle, and we may add, the symbolic representation. The same truth comes to us in every different dress to adapt it to varying tastes, or to enable it to act upon different minds or in different ways upon the same mind. Each has its respective merit of simplicity, or vividness, or pointed brevity, of quiet beauty, lofty grandeur, impassioned feeling, or resistless argument. Who would reduce all this to the dead level of a rigid uniformity? Who would go through its rich imagery, its eloquent appeals, its truthful exhibitions of life and character, extracting merely the truth which lies at the bottom, and which is thus variously illustrated and enforced, starching it into the uniformities of didactic statement, pressing it into the mould of a system, and then hold it up as the equivalent of its inspired original, and think that it has lost nothing by

the process? Who would deal thus with even the classic volumes of profane literature, substituting a digest of Milton for his immortal poem, or accepting, instead of the masterpieces of oratorical power, a logical summary of their contents? The truth may be preserved and given to us in well-balanced statements. The intellectual conception of it in all its parts and harmonies and relations may be aided; but we lack the glow of thought, the ardent feeling, the forceful illustration. What didactic statement could supply the place of the parable of the Prodigal Son? Or what moral drawn from the book of Job would answer instead of its sublime descriptions and its touching argument? What summary of abstract principles embodied in the lives of holy men of Scripture would make us willing to dispense with what we read of Abraham, and David, and Daniel, and Paul? Or what formulas of doctrine could lift us to the conception of a character such as that of the blessed Redeemer, or could take its place in the effect upon the heart? Could any systematic presentation of the truths relating to the person, character, and work of Jesus equal the simple recital of what he did and said?

2. The diversities of aspect under which the truth is presented. When viewed in a system, each truth has its definite position and its relation to other parts of the system, which it preserves unchanged. But

when it is taken out of this artificial structure, in which for convenience in viewing it in its totality we have placed it, and is regarded in other than its logical relations in the abstract, we find that it may be presented in various lights, looked upon from different sides, and set in a variety of combinations. Truth in the abstract is one, but in its applications it is endlessly diversified; and it will change its hue with the medium through which it is examined. The same truth may be so exhibited as to alarm, to console, to instruct; it may be presented as a promise, a threatening, a didactic statement to the understanding, a solemn appeal to the heart. It may come in the shape of a precept, or an example. It may be adapted to the believer, or to the unbeliever, and that in the various conditions or states of feeling in which either may be. It appears in one light in the reproof administered to the Pharisee, and in another in the rebuke of his rival the Sadducee. It is brought out in its different shades by conflict with the errors of Judaism on the one hand, and Paganism and false philosophy on the other. It is seen in the course of the inspired volume in contact with the shifting circumstances of individuals, with changing states of society, and fluctuations in opinion, through a space of fifteen hundred years. Now, although it is the same truth which is thus variously exhibited, and a general mode of statement might be adopted which would



include under it all these particulars, yet what a difference would be made in its impressiveness and power! There are in the law the direct utterances of the divine will; and then in the Psalms we have the answering echo from the human heart. Do we feel that we could dispense with either the law or the Psalms, though the lessons of each are the same, only exhibited in different forms? Or, because the ten commands contain a summary of human duty, do they render every other scriptural injunction, or prophetic argument, or apostolic exhortation superfluous?

3. The diversities arising from the characteristics of individual writers. The Spirit of truth evinced infinite wisdom in selecting as his organs men of such various capacities and modes of thought, trained in different ways and under different circumstances, and adapted to play different parts in whatsoever they were called to engage. When they were inspired, this did not efface their peculiarities and reduce all to one level, and make Isaiah speak or think like Daniel, Ezekiel like Moses, Paul like John, a James like Peter. They were still in individual peculiarities what they had been before. We can trace the men in their writings when they were under the guidance of God's Spirit, just as plainly as though they were not. Moses was designed to be the legislator of the Hebrews; and he was first instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Saul of Tarsus was to preach



a righteousness not of the law, and that he might know thoroughly the system which he was to expose, he was brought up after the straitest sect, a Pharisee, and sent to sit at the feet of Gamaliel. The penmen of the Bible were first trained in God's providence to do a particular work in his kingdom, and they were then called to do it. They were so inspired as to record the truth and that only. But they exhibit it in just such different ways as the pure truth unadulterated by error would present itself to men of their various minds, habits, and tastes. This does not detract from the perfection of Scripture, but really renders the volume more complete, and adapts it better to the wants of men of every class. Their writings, tinged each by the peculiarities of its author, complete each other, as the various prismatic colours blend to form one pure white ray. They are like sketches of the same landscape taken from different points, the same objects in a new grouping, conveying a more adequate idea when looked at together than either could alone. We have, for example, four parallel narrations of the life of Christ. Who would be content to have one gospel of the four and part with the rest, even if it contained all the facts? Or who would take an artificial combination of the whole, a so-called harmony, and substitute it to the exclusion of the four in their present shape? Each one is adapted to make an impression of its own, is designed especially for a

particular class of readers, seizes the character of Christ upon a different side. And thus the impossibility of such a character as his being adequately conceived by any one man, or draughted in any one representation, is countervailed in a measure by allowing it to impress itself on different men, and letting them bring out each the precise impression it made upon themselves.

And yet, mistaking this design of the duplicate and the quadruplicate portions of Scripture, their existence has been made an occasion of cavil. And when, for instance, the same Psalm has been found repeated as used on different occasions, the variations, instead of being admitted to be original and designed, are converted into a pretext for carping at the accuracy of the text, as flagrant proofs of negligent transcription. The varying accounts of Kings and Chronicles have been wrested as though they were discrepancies, and invalidated, instead of completing and supporting each other. Minute and laborious examination has been expended in searching out pretended errors and grounds of complaint. But when a similar examination candidly pursued reveals as its result a separate principle which guided in the choice and the rejection of materials for either book, and shows each to be what it is and to contain what it does in order that it might be a unit, and might answer that particular end for which it was designed, then we see here again harmony in

the midst of diversity, not only preserved, but heightened by it to completeness. The attempt has been made to show from the inner constitution of the gospels and their relation to each other, that they are spurious and their accounts wholly fictitious, or highly coloured and unreliable. True, the external evidence in favour of these gospels is not so easy to be set aside by the plausibilities of ingenious but baseless hypotheses. But even if that were less convincing than it is, a more narrow scrutiny of those very features which have been made grounds of objection, is able to develop from them irrefragable evidence of truth and genuineness.

4. The diversities arising from the gradual communication of divine truth. The revelation of God was, after the analogy of most of his works, progressive; and that not only in its spread over the world, and in the effect that it produces on the individual soul which savingly embraces it, but in the fulness and clearness of its announcements. It was first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. It was at first the dawning light, then shone more and more unto the perfect day. The people of God were, as the Apostle teaches, placed under pupilage, to be trained up unto the coming of Christ. The education of the race in divine things was conducted upon a plan similar to that observed in the education of an individual from infancy to manhood. The elements were

taught before the maturer lessons. It does not fall within our present purpose to discuss the reasons why such a method of revelation was adopted, nor to show the ends which were answered by it. It is enough that He who does all things in the best method and at the proper time must have had adequate reasons for it. Now, if we throw all these communications of the Divine will and purposes into one general mass, instead of studying each separately in its order and considering the time of its unfolding and the place it holds in the gradual advance, we shall fail entirely to perceive the scheme that was observed in the revelation. We shall discern nothing of its wise orderings and of the fitness of its arrangements, which were such that nothing superfluous, nothing unseasonable, was at any time brought forward, but ever that which precisely met the necessities of each particular period, and was best adapted to pave the way for the ultimate supply of the necessities of the world. We shall close our eyes, too, upon much and striking evidence of the divine origin of the Scriptures which is thus furnished. When we see the communications of men in widely-different ages not only perfectly harmonizing with each other, not only marked every time by that precise adaptation, of which we have just spoken, to the condition and wants of God's people in each successive period, but, in addition, making steady advances to an end which, though manifestly beyond the reach of



human foresight, was yet as manifestly in contemplation from the outset, then, in the very construction of the Bible itself, and the relation of its several parts, we have the evidence that He is its author who knows the end from the beginning. We may take either the doctrines or the facts of the New Testament, and then turn to the pages of the Old, and we shall find reaching far back, ages before the perfect disclosure, hints of what was to come, or dim and shadowy outlines, or institutions evidently prefigurative, or lines tending toward it, or partial and for that reason oftentimes seemingly conflicting announcements, which can all be gathered up and harmonized in nothing else but that which we first learn completely when the mystery of God is finished and the fulness of time has come. And it is impossible to escape the conviction that He who gave these first obscure hints and partial intimations, had in view from the very beginning the full doctrine which should afterwards be revealed, and the great facts of redemption as they should ultimately be wrought out.

Besides, these elementary lessons still have their value; and they should still be consulted as they were originally given. The Church has not yet outgrown them, and it never will. But as the man of mature years may have his conceptions cleared by resorting again to the brief but well-constructed text-book of his childhood, so the Church, in all after ages, may turn



back with profit to the very earliest instructions she received from her heavenly Teacher.

The neglect of this advance in Scripture revelation may also be attended with positive injustice to the truth, if our ideas of doctrine and our proof-texts are drawn indiscriminately from all parts of the sacred volume, and we place side by side, as of equal value, the partial with the complete, and even that which was to be done away with that which has since taken its place. Or it may lead to an improper dealing with the word of God; to putting a force upon its expressions in order to extort from them a meaning which, though true in itself, and contained in its after revelations, would not be in its place there;—such as the vain attempts to find the deity of the Messiah, or a full exposition of justifying faith, among the first things in the Bible. This can only have the effect of encouraging a perversion of Scripture from its just import on the one hand, or, on the other, of weakening to thinking minds, instead of supporting, truths which are really contained in the Bible, though, for sufficient reasons, they were not unfolded in the earlier stages of divine revelation.

These various diversities to which we have referred (and it is needless to prolong the enumeration), have their value and importance in the constitution of the book of God; and they furnish a very powerful reason why, among our various methods of studying the

sacred volume, we should have one which, neither fusing all these into a uniform mass, nor exalting any one into an unnatural prominence, shall inspect them all just in that order and measure in which they lie spread before us in the Scriptures themselves.

Allow me to urge again, in favour of the consecutive exegetical study of the Bible, its tendency to promote an unbiassed and correct interpretation. The sentiments of an author cannot of course be gathered so readily or so well from disjointed sentences brought together because of their real or supposed bearing on the same subject, as from a careful perusal of his writing, weighing each paragraph as it stands, and forming a judgment from the combined impression of the whole. Each sentence is modified in meaning by the context in which it is found, by the position it holds in the argument, by the general drift of the discourse, in fine, by a hundred things which can only be appreciated by him who comes regularly upon it in its connexion. An entire book, too, will of course be better understood by being studied thus. The circumstances of its origin, the design of its composition, the state of opinion among those to whom it was addressed, the errors, it may be, which it aimed to controvert, individual peculiarities in the use of words or turns of expression, can all then be taken into the account, and allowed their proper weight in determining the meaning.

In this way, also, we can best meet the difficulties and objections which have been raised respecting various parts of Scripture. They are far less formidable when we come upon them in detail ; and the very fact of viewing them thus often supplies all the answer they require. It is an artifice of the opposers of the Bible to produce a false glare by culling these out, and putting them all together, so as to create the impression of an appalling array. And even when they are brought together for the sake of answering them, it lends them a factitious importance, creates an undue sense of their number and magnitude, and gives an appearance of strength to many a point, which, considered alone, would be seen to be perfectly trivial.

It is an important advantage, likewise, that we thus study the Scriptures independently and in themselves, and not simply as they bear upon a given creed, which we are labouring to establish. If we go through the Bible simply for materials to build up a certain system, however true that system may be, we are not so favourably circumstanced for arriving at its true meaning, as though we had no aim beyond that of simply unfolding whatever it may be discovered to teach. Our investigations will be warped by the one idea which we are pursuing, and we will be tempted to seek dogmatic senses where none were intended. We are aware that the pretence of impartiality has been made the cover of great abuse, and under professions of

candour and freedom from prejudice, the inspired word has been divested of its real sense, and made to teach everything in fact but what it does teach. We do not wish our exegete to be without a settled creed, or a knowledge of the analogy of faith, or to be so in love with novelties of interpretation that anything being embraced within the belief of past ages shall be with him a positive reason for its rejection. Let the examination of the Scriptures be conducted on right principles ; let no insidious maxims be covertly adopted. Insist on rigid interpretation, and assume them to mean precisely what they say, as judged of by the ordinary laws of human speech. Then let their contents be developed fairly and fully. Let them speak their own language, and tremble at no results which may be disclosed. If any article of faith has been customarily bolstered up by a wrong interpretation of any passage, have no apprehension as to the result, though you let the unsound prop fall. A truly scriptural creed need have nothing to fear from bringing the inspired testimony fairly out ; for one proof-passage that is lost or weakened to its cause, a hundred will be summoned around it entirely new, or will be found to possess unlooked-for strength and pertinence. And if a creed be not truly scriptural, the sooner the rottenness of its foundation is exposed, the better. We wish nothing to remain among our tenets which the word of God, honestly expounded, will not sanction. With an



increased attention paid to the direct study of the Bible, we may expect that the creeds of Christendom will be more closely assimilated to it, and of course to each other; the importance of tenets will be more exactly graduated by that assigned to them in the word of truth; false and erroneous modes of statement will be discarded for the scriptural and the true. And thus we may hope for a nearer approximation to that unity of belief which some dream of as already brought about.

It is a farther recommendation of this mode of study, that by it the whole of the contents of the inspired volume are most likely to be brought out, and all in their due proportion. The divine sovereignty cannot be left out of view, nor can human responsibility. He who goes regularly through the Bible cannot avoid finding both. If he be disposed to place doctrine above practice, or to despise doctrine and exalt practice, he will still find here a correction of his error. That which he might have overlooked, or which might find no place in his system, will yet inevitably be brought before him.

The faith of the Church, and her knowledge of what is given to her in the Scriptures, have never been stationary, and there is no reason why they should be considered more so now than at any former period. She has received in the inspired volume an inexhaustible fund of truth, and it is her province to evolve from it



whatever is adapted to her wants and circumstances. Every period in her history, every controversy she has had to wage, has settled more definitely points of her faith. She has not changed her creed, but more clearly defined it. She has brought out with more distinctness, and fixed with greater precision, the tenets she has learned from the Bible. We do not know that the multiform shades of error are exhausted yet. We do not know what points of the truth, now unthought of or little regarded, may, in a new condition of the Church, or a new turn of the conflict she is waging, be lifted into unexpected prominence. We know not what pieces of celestial armour, offensive and defensive, lie yet unused in this great magazine, nor what future exigencies may arise which shall require them. If all Scripture is profitable, we must not take our stand barely upon the faith evolved from it by the early fathers, nor must we make a dead halt when we reach the faith of the Reformation. Truth is one, but it has its changing relations to the changing state of things. At one time, certain features are called forth into bold relief,—at another, others. The exhibition of the same system must of course be varied by the wants of the age and the Church. If we would fulfil our duty in this respect, and neither be swung off from the true foundation, nor bring in a load of human fancies and traditions, we must resort perpetually to the Scriptures as the

fountain-head and well-spring of truth. We wish the Scriptures searched, that all the divine store here made over to us may be drawn forth and made available, and that none of its choice pieces of trusty armour may be left to lie rusting near us, when they ought to be furbished ready for use.

It is an additional reason for thorough exegetical study, that the Bible is already studied thus by its adversaries; and we can in no other way qualify ourselves for its successful defence. This is an age of minute searching investigation. Every department of knowledge has received from it a fresh impetus. Thousands of eager eyes are in every direction prying into the mysteries of nature, and with astonishing success. History is put to the proof, and forced to divulge her secrets; and even from the hoary monuments of Egypt and of Nineveh the rubbish of many centuries has been cleared away, their pictures copied, and their strange inscriptions read. It is not surprising that in this general activity of mind, this craving for new results, a share of attention should be directed upon the Bible, possessing the attractions that it does, and of such a varied kind. Philology, History, Antiquarian Research, Religious Symbols and Architecture, Metaphysics, Morals, Philosophy, and even Physical Science, have each their points of contact with it. And from all these different directions, as well as from that of Christian doctrine and Church questions, it has

been approached and searched with microscopic care, and it would be wonderful if there were no useful result from all this labour. The enthusiasm for science that has impelled the search, or the literary zeal expended, has too frequently, it is true, forgotten the sacredness of the ground it was treading, and been no more concerned about the results at which it should arrive, and rated no higher the authority of the volume it held, than if Moses, Isaiah, or John, were no more than Herodotus, Homer, or Plato. Sometimes there has been carried into the investigation a rage for novelty, which found its delight in unsettling established opinions, and smiled at the greatness of the ruin it could make. Sometimes there has been a worse spirit still,—one of positive hostility to this holy book,—which took a malignant pleasure in raising doubts respecting its genuineness and its truth, or in venting its spleen by sneers and misrepresentations. Still, whether in pretence or in truth, whether from envy and strife, or from good-will, the Bible is searched; and we therein do rejoice,—yea, and will rejoice. If it has not always been with a proper spirit of reverential inquiry, if it has been sometimes with a spirit most opposite to a love of Christian truth, we are yet glad of anything which has been made the occasion of directing so many acute and learned observers upon the scrutiny of the sacred volume, and which has led to the development of its

contents under so many and such widely-different points of view. We are glad if devotion to science and letters—we may even say that we are thankful if malignity against the book of God itself,—had been made in his good providence thus to contribute to our increased knowledge of his blessed word. Much vain display of learning there has been, and many crazy theories and idle fancies; but with all the rubbish, there have been thrown up gems and lumps of precious metal. While we reject the worthless and the false, it is our wisdom eagerly to treasure up the valuable and the true.

More is demanded of the theologian, however, than simply that he should stand quietly by, and avail himself of what is valuable in the labours of others. To lean upon foreign researches, especially when they have been conducted upon unsound principles, is neither sufficient nor safe. These researches have led to every variety of result. Many things have been brought out, many more pretended, which seem to have a doubtful or injurious bearing upon the cause of religious truth. Learning must be met by learning on its own chosen field. The friends of sound doctrine owe it to themselves and to the goodness of their cause, that it should not be worsted through their inefficiency or neglect. They must subject the Scriptures to an independent investigation, and especially upon those points where they have been impugned;



they must make strong their defences, and show how on every side the faith once delivered to the saints rests on a firm foundation, and is surrounded by impregnable bulwarks. There are questions which cannot be evaded, which it were unmanly to attempt to evade, and which can only thus be put to rest. If the genuineness of parts of Holy Writ is contested on philological grounds, or if its thorough inspiration is denied on internal evidence, it is well if we can rebut it from other sources, by bringing satisfactory and conclusive proof of the truth that is impugned. But the objection is only then completely demolished, when the question in philology is itself inquired into, and the alleged internal evidence is sifted, and it is shown that even there the argument is not against the truth, but for the truth.

As a closing consideration upon this subject, we would have you look at the position which exegetical study occupies with respect to other branches of ministerial training, and to the active duties of ministerial labour. The chief design of theological education is, as we have said before, to train up men who shall be mighty in the Scriptures, able rightly to expound, defend, and enforce them. We want a ministry well versed in every branch of Scriptural knowledge. For this, exegetical study must of course lay the groundwork. It furnishes the materials from which they are to draw in their systematic or topical study of the



sacred volume. After we have first gone through the Bible, and ascertained the meaning of its various parts, we are then prepared to reduce what we have gained to one comprehensive system, or to examine it under the various points of view, in which it may be properly and profitably presented. Dogmatic Theology, as it brings the creed of the Church to the test of the Bible; Systematic Theology, as it developes its creed out of the Bible; Historic Theology, as it traces the growth of the Scripture revelation, or the subsequent unfolding of its truths to the consciousness of the Church; Polemic Theology, as it deals with the various errors that have arisen in conflict with the truth; Pastoral Theology, as it dwells upon the nature and the active duties of the ministerial office;—all presuppose for their successful pursuit a sound and thorough exegesis as their basis. And the recent Assembly, when they embodied in the form of a resolution the long-established practice of this institution, rightly judged that every professor in the Theological Seminary ought “to give instruction in some portion of the Sacred Scriptures.”

For the duties of the sacred desk a thorough exegetical acquaintance with Scripture is a most invaluable aid. It will prepare the minister truly to teach the people knowledge, instead of bringing before them superficial and desultory harangues. It will make his preaching biblical, both in the matter of his dis-

course, and the manner of its presentation. It will enable him, instead of merely connecting some topic with the language of the Scriptures, to develop what they truly contain. It will open up before him a boundless variety in the mode of handling, illustrating, and enforcing truth. It will furnish him, in the well-studied volume of inspiration itself, a model which he cannot too closely follow, in adapting the truth to tell with the most effect upon the hearts and consciences of his hearers. It will provide him the requisite material for a mode of preaching which has of late fallen greatly into abuse, but which, properly managed and lifted above the merely commonplace, has such obvious advantages that its revival is earnestly to be desired,—that of continuous exposition.

#### GENTLEMEN OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS :

You may readily imagine with what trembling I assume the duties of the new position to which the voice of the Church has called me from the midst of a much-loved congregation, and with what diffidence I find myself placed beside these fathers in age and experience, and these luminaries in learning and theological science, who have made this Seminary what it is in the eyes of the Church and of the world. Nothing but a trust in your kind indulgence, and in that which I have already so largely experienced from these venerated instructors, at whose feet I should

esteem it a rare privilege to be still permitted to sit, would ever have prevailed upon me to suffer myself to be placed where I stand this day. It is my comfort that there is ONE in whom weakness itself can be made strong, and who can use the feeblest instrument for spreading abroad his glory.







